

REMARKS

By this amendment, claims 2, 4, 11, 31, 38 and 44-46 have been Canceled and claims 1, 3, 5-7, 10, 17, 19-22, 25, 30, 32, and 37 have been amended. The application thus contains claims 1, 3, 5-10, 12-30, 32-37, and 39-43.

Claims 44-46 have not been Canceled for any reason related to patentability but have been withdrawn and may be pursued in one or more continuation or divisional applications. In this regard applicant affirms the election of claims 1-43 for prosecution at this time.

The Examiner rejected claims 1-6, 10, 19-21, 30, 33, 37 and 40 under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Nigon et al (US 6,549,125 B2) in view of Snyder (US 4,510,484). The Examiner also rejected claims 22-24, 34, 35 and 41 under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Nigon et al (US 6,549,125 B2) in view of Snyder (US 4,510,484) and further in view of Chang et al (US 6,591,672 B2). The Examiner also rejected claims 25 and 26 under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Nigon et al (US 6,549,125 B2) in view of Snyder (US 4,510,484) and further in view of Nowicki et al (US 5,559,484). The Examiner also rejected claim 27 under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Nigon et al (US 6,549,125 B2) in view of Snyder (US 4,510,484) and further in view of Daly et al (US 4,487,154).

The Examiner also indicated claims 7-9, 11-18, 28, 29, 31, 32, 36, 38, 39, 42 and 43 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

In view of the allowable subject matter indicated by the Examiner, applicant has amended claim 1 to include the limitations of claims 2 and 11 which the Examiner indicated would be allowable. Therefore the rejection of claim 1 is overcome. Claims 2 and 4 have been Canceled and therefore the rejection as it pertains to this claim is overcome. Claims 3, 5-7, 10, 17, 19-22 and 25 have been amended to remove their dependence from a claim that has been

Canceled and are ultimately dependent upon amended claim 1. The rejections as they pertain to claims 3-6, 10 and 19-27 are therefore overcome since these claims are ultimately dependent upon amended claim 1 and since they claim additional subject matter in addition to that recited in amended claim 1. Claims 7-9, 11-18, 28 and 29 were indicated to be allowable. Consequently claims 1, 3-10 and 12-29 should be allowable.

In view of the allowable subject matter indicated by the Examiner, applicant has amended claim 30 to include the limitations of claim 31 which the Examiner indicated would be allowable. Therefore the rejection of claim 30 is overcome. Claim 31 has been Canceled. Claim 32 has been amended to remove its dependence from a claim that has been Canceled and is ultimately dependent upon amended claim 30. Claim 32 has already been indicated to be allowable. The rejections as they pertain to claims 33-35 are therefore overcome since these claims are ultimately dependent upon amended claim 30 and since they claim additional subject matter in addition to that recited in amended claim 30. Consequently claims 30 and 32-36 should be allowable.

In view of the allowable subject matter indicated by the Examiner, applicant has amended claim 37 to include the limitations of claim 38 which the Examiner indicated would be allowable. Therefore the rejection of claim 37 is overcome. Claim 38 has been Canceled. Claims 39, 42 and 43 were indicated to be allowable. The rejections as they pertain to claims 40 and 41 are therefore overcome since these claims are ultimately dependent upon amended claim 37 and since they claim additional subject matter in addition to that recited in amended claim 37. Consequently claims 37 and 39-43 should be allowable.

Applicant respectfully requests further favorable consideration of the application.

Applicant herewith petitions for an automatic extension of time for three months, from January 10, 2004 to April 10, 2004, for responding to the outstanding Office Action dated October 10, 2003.

A check in the amount of \$475.00 is attached for the extension fee pursuant to 37 C.F.R. Section 1.17(a). Small Entity status has already been established.

Respectfully submitted,

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JWK:cmm
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